

Porlock Parish Council – Portfolio Report – March 2025

(Ongoing unresolved items from previous reports have been left in)

Porlock Parish Council Logo

Redesign – The redesign is undergoing further review with Cllrs C Gardner and S McCanlis. Following engagement with the Collage of Arms as to the origins of the logo as requested by Council they have advised as they can find no record of any registration of the logo that “Council may perhaps be well-advised to cease using its current logo, given the appearance of an heraldic device”. Clarification has been sought from them if this is required or recommendation.

Woodcott Cottage Sewer – Savills have confirmed that the sewer issues on the woodland walk are the responsibility of the resident of the cottage. They have notified the resident of the issue. Council continues to receive multiple complaints about the sewage. Wessex Water have confirmed that as the sewer is not on their network it falls to the responsibility of the land/property owner. Somerset Council’s environmental health and Exmoor National Park team have also been informed. Residents are being encouraged to also report it to Somerset Council and ENPA

Idverde bins

Reinstating of three bins – The bins have been installed/repositioned and a risk assessment will be undertaken by Idverde once spend has been approved

Doverhay Toilets

Toilet Reinstatement – An electrician has been to resolve the electrical issues now waiting date for works to be carried out including the light fittings. Racking to be purchased for storing cleaning materials.

Emergency Call Alarms – Coomber Security will quote for provision of alarms and call service

St Dubricius Churchyard

Unsafe Memorial Works – Works will commence in the Spring (date TBC)

Additional Works – Advice and quotes are being obtained and will be presented to Council for consideration once received. Work should be completed by the autumn 2025.

- Footpath at the rear which ENPA have advised the only option is to raise the path to avoid damage to the roots of the yew tree. Quote has been received this will be presented to Council once all quotes have been received.
- Masonry wall to the south. Cavities in between stones is showing a loss of mortar. This whole wall could undergo a consolidation.
- Post finial has now been repaired and the bill settled
- Coping to the west of the gate piers to the north path need consolidation.
- Church cross on the churchyard will require minor masonry maintenance every other year.

Hawkcombe Cemetery

Cemetery Site Assessment – Report and recommendations are being presented at this month’s the Ordinary meeting of the Council.

Unsafe Memorials – Risk assessment completed and included as part of the cemetery recommendations.

Memorial Benches

Kingdon – Invoice for installation has been received and payment from the Kingdon family has been requested. A payment for the same amount of money has been received but not by Kingdon family - to be followed up.

Other Benches – A full assessment has been carried out update within the cemetery assessment report

Grounds Maintenance

Coach Road Gate – A quote has been received for consideration

Tree Survey - Date pending.

Old School Centre (Right hand side) – Stone wall needs reviewing. A contractor will be requested to come and assess the wall.

Porlock Marsh War Memorial

Bench – The bench is now in place

Old School Centre (Building)

Business Risks

Alarm System – Zoning will be completed as part of the OSC Works Project.

Fire Risk Assessment – Good progress has been made to ensure all recommendations are being addressed. The next visit will be once the OSC Works project has concluded

Electrical Inspection – Quote with council at this month's Ordinary meeting of the Council for consideration.

Waste – Sanitary and green waste contracts will be set up to commence in April 2025 following approval of the 2025-2026 Budget.

Flagpole – Waiting quotes for Council to consider.

Outside lights, fairy lights & Socket fault – Quote with council at this month's Ordinary meeting of the Council for consideration.

Staff Toilet – there has been a recent bout of public including groups in the library using the staff toilet and leaving it in an unacceptable state. Following the change of locks at the OSC a spare lock barrel will be fitted to make the toilet accessible only with a key.

Car Park at the Village Hall

Entrance Gate & Post – The gate post has been fixed and gate rehung. A email of thanks was received and requested that thanks be passed on to Council. Reflectors will be fitted to the gate to enable visibility of the gate post.

Street Furniture, displays & equipment

Noticeboard at Doverhay Car park - has been fixed by the PPC Caretaker

Notice boards at OSC – Proposal to be developed and costs to be obtained.

Noticeboard at Central Garage – The Porlock Vale Maintenance Team will take on the refurbishment of these notice boards.

Noticeboard outside hardware store - No further update.

St Dubricius Notice Board - Following an assessment by the PPC Caretaker the refurbishment is a simple replacement of cork tiles and a coat of paint if necessary, the church have approved this work to take place.

Benches – First renovation at the OSC once the weather improves nearer to spring. Date TBC.

Bleed Kits - The limpet kit purchased by the Council for the defibrillator at the Recreation Ground has been installed.

Defibrillators – An assessment of the phone box outside the Village hall has taken place and with some minor amendments and refurbishment of the phone box a unit could be installed. The Porlock Vale Maintenance Team have agreed to take on the task of refurbishing the phone box. There is currently a supply hold by the manufacturer on the existing unit deployed in the village. Once supply is known pricing and timescale will be better understood.

Emergency plan – An initial meeting was held at the end of February with Alistair Campbell (Flood Warden), Cllr. Stephen Colson, Debbie Stanyon (Information Centre Manager) it was a productive meeting with an agreement of the sharing of existing plans and steps in developing a plan. The group will meet again in April to share progress. The Clerk will be attending a Somerset Prepared training session on the 25th March. Work continues to review Council's own business resilience plans.

Somerset Rivers Authority Grant Fund – An application was submitted for emergency flood equipment. Early feedback is that potentially this should be funded by Somerset Prepared grant fund however the application will still be heard. The Clerk will work on a grant funding application to be submitted in time for the April review.

Pollards Court No Turning Bay – A resident has requested that a parking restrictions are reviewed at Pollards court as the turn bay is frequently used for parking causing obstruction especially for emergency vehicle. Following the meeting contact has been made with SC and Magana housing to understand who owns the land before Council deploy the signs.

Elections – There were no new applications for election in March. The next Casual Vacancy window will be published in (May Date TBC).

Traffic and Road Safety Working Group – written by Stephen Colson

Valuable input has been received from the Somerset Area Highways Manager regarding possible road improvements in the village.

The widening of the virtual footpath on Dunster Steep is supported by Highways on safety grounds under a 171 licence, and Highways are willing to gift a licence to us for this work. They recommend using CK Lynch & Sons as a reliable contractor with appropriate highways experience. Whether or not to receive a quotation for this work is on the agenda of the 26th March Council meeting.

Creating an informal pedestrian crossing (for example the red paved areas on the High St in Minehead) to make it easier for pedestrians with limited mobility to cross the road doesn't appear to be feasible. Due to utilities in the road at the places under consideration (e.g. near Abbeyfield) and the need for road reinforcement due to the narrowness of the road at such points, this would be impractical and costly.

On a related matter, it is not considered advisable to create 'build outs' at either end of the two on-street parking areas on the High St near the Pharmacy and Spar. A build out is where a raised kerb protects each end of the parking bay, as a refuge for pedestrians to make it easier to cross the road. However, parking spaces would be lost in creating the build outs and it may also increase the time it takes to park, which could increase congestion.

The speed indicator device for a speed awareness campaign will be purchased once suitable locations to site the SID have been identified.

All outstanding recommendations from the Traffic Calming and Road Safety Working Group have now been completed, and a final report will be written in time for the Annual Parish Meeting.

Other Highways matters – written by Stephen Colson

The consultation process and signs for the TRO's for the yellow lines on Redway, the kerb ticks on the High Street and the Disabled Parking Bay on the High Street are now underway and will be complete at around the end of this month. Depending on what (if any) responses have been received, these items should be added to the Highways contractor's work schedule in the coming weeks.

It may be possible to receive funds to install bus shelters on the High St, as part of Somerset Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan. This is on the March 26th Council agenda for consideration.

It hasn't been possible to reinstate the road sign at the Castle, which signposts Central car park. The contractor was unable to remove the old concrete which retained the original post, and there is nowhere else to site a post due to the presence of various services (electricity, telephone etc.).

Car Parking Working Group written by Stephen Colson

Somerset Council parking services have confirmed that they currently have the right balance of seasonal tickets holders vs. day parking in Central Car Park, and therefore promotion of season tickets isn't preferred. Any 'free parking days' would be charged to PPC at their standard rate, which replaces their lost income based on average occupancy rates on the days/times of year requested. It is estimated that one free day per week to encourage use of the car park would cost £3,000 - £4,000 per year and this is therefore not recommended by the working group.

Parking Services have agreed to add one extra free 15 minutes shoppers' bay to Doverhay car park, at no cost to PPC. This will be added to their work schedule soon. No agreement has been reached for similar shoppers' bays in Central car park, while the county-wide car parks policy is under review.

The car parking working group has the following recommendation for Council to consider:

1. Promotional campaign to raise awareness of Central car park and the fact that its short stay tariff is the same as Doverhay car park. This is to encourage use of the car park for shoppers and visitors. Work with SC parking services to monitor any impact.
2. Keep free 15 minutes shoppers' parking bays in Central car park under review.

Late Night Shopping Working Group written by Cllr. D McCanlis

No plans have been drawn up for this year's event. To be actioned.

Events and Festival Working Group written by Cllr S. McCanlis

Coleridge weekend - tickets have sold well and everything is in hand. Risk Assessments for walks will be logged with the clerk by Friday.

The Old School Centre Community Garden Working Group – written by Don Heath

There have been zero responses from the original groups involved in the set up. Cllr. Heath and his wife will begin pruning back of the top garden with Cllr. S McCanlis taking away the debris.

Christmas Lights & Trees Working Group - written by Sue McCanlis

A core group of four have met twice since January. The working group will meet again at the village hall on 9th April to label and store the lights in the Village Hall cellar. Any repairs to the wooden trees will also be made then.

A bow making workshop will be run by Jan West in the summer. We have secured funding for materials for this. Funding will be needed for Christmas trees and for solar icicle lights for the Church railings (these are seen as an investment for the village). We are hoping to gradually move away from battery lights to solar or mains in most locations.

Porlock Community Library – written by Mary Perkins

Touch Screen Monitor - The touch screen monitor provided by Citizen's Advice West Somerset (CAWS) has been returned to them, as it would not connect wirelessly, despite several efforts. However, access to their website is still possible through the library's own public computers and an easy access guide is being produced to help would-be users. Also, the library hopes to have available leaflets from CAWS giving advice on various topics.

Winter Coat Scheme - The library service is wrapping up its Winter Coat scheme now spring is on the way. It has been well used in the village with 62 donations and 34 coats being recycled to new homes. It will return in the autumn.

Activity Trackers - The library has recently taken delivery, via the library service, two activity tracker watches. These can be borrowed, free of charge for a period of six weeks.

Author Talks - On 26th March author Justin Newland will be giving a talk "The Hidden Story of the Repulse of the Spanish Armada". Justin explores an alternative concept to the accepted text!!

Future activities - Plans are afoot for various craft events during the Easter holidays. This will include a "Story Explorer" session run by Somerset Skills and Learning (SSAL) for pre-school and primary aged children and their parents, carers etc. If it is sufficiently well supported SSAL is prepared to put on more events in the library - not just for children.

Library Expansion - The move into the new Lovelace Resource Centre/Library extension is slowly taking shape. Most of the shelving - much of which has been repurposed - is in place. Once carpet has been laid the library will be able to complete its much anticipated move.

Feedback - The Library received thanks from the West Somerset Food Cupboard for the way in which the library and the Parish Clerk supported a homeless person recently with emergency food parcels, warm drinks, hot water for a thermos and computer access.

Doverhay Manor – Written by Duncan McCanlis

Further to the meeting held in January, there has been little progress. Another gathering of all concerned is planned regarding the possible restructure of the two charities.

Porlock Village Hall – no update this month

Local Community Network – A copy of the last meeting minutes (draft) has been circulated to Cllrs.